

CURSOR

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. QBG 3958

Vol.5 No.2 - SEPTEMBER 1988

NEWSLETTER of the COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.

V//AMIGA EDITION

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MEETINGS - WHERE & WHEN

MAIN MEETING: Tuesday 6th September 1988 in the Bardon Professional Development Centre, 390 Simpsons Road, Bardon. Entrance is through the Centre's Car Park in Carwoola Street. Doors open 7pm (Library & Sales). Meeting starts at 8pm sharp and finishes at 10 pm.

PageSetter Demonstration by Ellen Appleby

AMIGA WORK SHOP: Sunday 11th September 1988 (1pm - 5 pm) in the Ithaca R.S.L. Hall, corner of Nash & Elizabeth Sts., Rosalie.

Work Shop Sessions for Beginners & Programmers

Video Work Shop (Robert Googe) - Sound Work Shop (Mike Williams)

Opportunity to purchase Disks, Disk Boxes and other Accessories.

Further information: Ph. Bruce Wylle - (075) 489 038 (a.h.) or Steve McNamee - 262 1127 (a.h.)

REGIONAL MEETINGS

CANNON HILL: Last Saturday of the month (12 noon - 12 midnight) in the Cannon Hill State School. Ph. Don Friswell - 343 1735 a.h.

CAPALABA: 3rd Saturday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Capalaba State Primary School (Redland Education Centre). Ph. David Adams - 396 8501 a.h.

KINGSTON: 2nd Friday of the month (7pm - 10pm) in the Kingston State School. Ph. Peter Martin - 290 1537 a.h.

PINE RIVERS: 1st Sunday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Strathpine State High School. Ph. Barry Bean - 269 7390 a.h.

SHERWOOD: 2nd Friday of the month (7.30pm) in the Graceville State School. Ph. Leigh Winsor - 379 2405 a.h. / Philip Parkin - 818 1172 a.h.

WAVELL HEIGHTS: 2nd Tuesday of the month (7.15pm - 9.45pm) in the Wavell State High School, Childers St. Entrance. Ph. Cor Geels - 263 2839

SUNSHINE COAST meets regularly. For meeting times, dates, places:

Ph. Harvey Riddle - 071 / 421 036 or Ph. Vic Mobbs - 071 / 941 330

MARYBOROUGH/HERVEY BAY: 4th Monday of the month (7pm - 10 pm) in the Sunbury State School, Alice St. Ph. Terry Baade - 071 / 215 059 a.h.

Copying of Commercial Software is NOT allowed at our Meetings!

GOODS & SERVICES

BLANK DISKS 5,25" (DS/DD) - \$10.00 per 10 (+ \$2.00 Postage)

BLANK DISKS 3,5" (DS/DD) - \$30.00 per 10 (+ \$2.00 Postage)

PUBLIC DOMAIN DISKS 3,5" - \$5.00 ea. (+ \$2.00 Postage for up to 5 Disks)

3,5" DISK LABELS (68x68 mm) - 48 labels \$1.00 (+ \$2.00 Postage per order)

DISK BOXES for 3,5" disks (hold 40) - \$15.00 ea (+ \$5.00 Postage)

DISK BOXES for 3,5" disks (hold 80) - \$20.00 ea (+ \$5.00 Postage)

"AMIGA DOS SUMMARY" - \$3.00 ea (+ \$1.00 Postage)

"AMIGA BEGINNERS GUIDE" (CLI etc.) - \$3.00 ea (+ \$1.00 Postage)

"BBS INSTRUCTION BOOK" - \$3.00 ea (+ \$1.00 Postage)

AMIGA SPECIAL PRINTER CABLE (A600 & A2000) - \$25.00 (+ \$3.00 Postage)

ADDRESS LABELS (23 x 89 mm) - \$14.00 per 1000 (+ \$2.00 Postage)

RIBBONS for MPS-1000, GX/LX-80 PRINTERS: \$9.00 (+ \$1.00 Postage)

RIBBONS for MPS-1200/50, CITIZEN 120-D PRINTERS: \$12.00 (+ \$1.00 Postage)

RIBBONS for RITEMAN C or F PRINTERS: \$15.00 (+ \$1.00 Postage)

All Mail Orders to: P.O. Box 274 - Springwood - QLD - 4127
Cheques to be made out to: C.C.U.G. (Q) Inc.

C. C. U. G. (Q.) INC. MEMBERSHIP FEES

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (PLUS \$10.00 JOINING FEE):

Ordinary* Membership...\$25.00 - Country/Associate Membership...\$15.00
Student/Pensioner Membership...\$15.00 - Family/Business Membership...\$35.00

(*Within the B'ne Metropolitan Phone District)

Direct all membership enquiries to:

*The Secretary, C.C.U.G. (Q) Inc.
P.O. Box 274, Springwood, Q'ld, 4127*

"CURSOR" COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATE:

\$30.00 per full page, per issue.

[All artwork etc. to be supplied by the advertiser.]

BYTES

FOR SALE

Commodore 1020 5¼" 40-track drive. To run IBM type software via the Transformer program.
Priced to sell quickly at \$200.00.

Contact Steve McNamee on (07) 262 1127 (a.h.)

3,5" DISK BOX - Heavy duty timber construction, holds 200+ disks. \$25.00 (collected).

Contact Ralph De Vries on (07) 300 3477.

COMMENT

by Ralph De Vries

In our library we have a copy of the desktop publishing program *PageSetter*. Like many similar high powered programs this one has been subject to two revisions (versions 1.0e and 1.1e).

In the USA or Canada it's a simple matter to obtain upgrades at minimal costs. Send your original program back to the manufacturer and a couple of weeks later your replacement disk is yours..... not so however in Australia.

The Australian distributor for this program is none other than Commodore Business Machines. When I rung CBM to inquire about the cost of the upgrade, I was told that they *did* offer an upgrade service on *Professional Page*, (from the same manufacturer), but not on *PageSetter*. If I wanted to obtain a copy I had to send my original back to Canada! End of story.

The standard excuse for high software pricing in Australia, is the cost of backup services. Who is kidding who? Is a \$300.00 program (*PageSetter*) not worth upgrading? Do I have to spend \$600.00 plus (*Professional Page*) to obtain service?

With that type of "stuff the customer" attitude I don't think that CBM will ever get past first base, no matter how good their products may be.

PARCOM PTY. LTD.

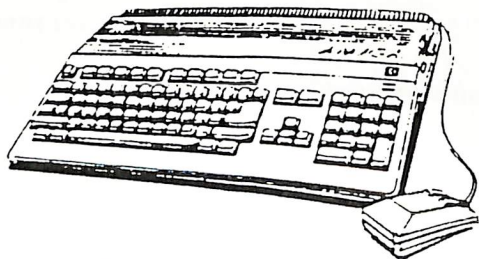
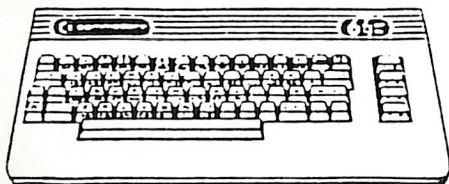
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NORTH SIDE: 1 CLIFFORD STREET, STAFFORD, 4053. Ph. (07) 857 6311

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Replacement Circuit Board Service:

For C-64 - \$89.00 + Your Old Board

For Vic 20 - \$69.00 + Your Old Board

(all boards must be in serviceable condition)

Special Rates for Users Group Members!

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT REVIEWS AND SOFTWARE PIRACY

In a recent issue of *Compute!'s Gazette* several pages were devoted to the topic of software piracy. It contained all the standard arguments why one should or shouldn't pirate software which I don't intend to repeat in these pages. However I feel that one very important aspect of this particular topic has been completely neglected, namely the wretched question if a particular item of software will be the right one for you, the end user (In this context I am NOT concerned with games software).

Take, as an example, the prospective purchaser of a database program. Assuming that he/she knows roughly what they want (i.e. amount and size of the records, sorting facilities, database to be 'relational' or simply a 'flat file' type, programmability, what is required in report generation etc.), the following step is to purchase the program, and that is where the real problems start. You can begin by reading reviews (always assuming that you've got access to all the relevant magazines or newsletters), and then find that the review in question doesn't even mention a particular aspect that you happen to be interested in. You can talk to owners of a database program, but are their requirements the same as yours? This is very unlikely indeed. Now you go and visit one or more computer dealers. Dealer X stocks programs A, B and C. Dealer Y stocks programs C, D and E. Maybe (and it is a very small 'maybe'), the dealer has actually used one of these programs, by my bet is that he/she has not. (I am NOT having a 'dig' at dealers; if they had to try out every software package on their shelves they wouldn't have any time left to run their business.) Let us assume now that you have made up your mind to purchase package C - after all two dealers stock it, your friend says it is marvellous, and a reviewer gave it five stars. You count out your three hundred dollar coins and walk away with your newly acquired piece of software. When you get home you start on the tedious task of entering those 2000 names and addresses. After a month or so they are all in place and then (shock, horror) you discover that a)- you have run out of memory, b)- that sorting these names and addresses takes an eternity, and c)- the program doesn't allow you to print out your records in the format which you require. So what do you do now? Perhaps, if you get on very well with your dealer, they may be prepared to exchange the program, but in most cases you will discover that you are stuck with a \$300.00 'lemon'.

This fictitious scenario is not uncommon at all. Amongst your fellow members you will find quite a few similar horror stories. The point is, where do you go from here? It is becoming very obvious that software reviews are often a glorified re-write of the blurb on the software package. It is only in some magazines (i.e. *The Amigan Apprentice & Journeyman* and *INFO*) that you get some hard hitting reviews which don't pull any punches, and that's what the prospective purchaser really needs. The other alternative is to try to get hold of some software from a friend and try it before you buy. Now surely this is 'piracy'? Well, yes and no. If, after trying out several packages, you decide that a certain program is the one for you, you should go out and buy the original - if it is a legitimate piece of software by a recognised manufacturer/distributor, you usually become a 'registered' user and have the benefit of any updates to the program at (usually) reasonable rates; I know quite a few people who have exactly done that. If, on the other hand, you are quite content to hang on to your friend's copy, you are just another software pirate.

In the last few months or so I have had the opportunity to look at a variety of word processor packages. Some were originals, others were 'copies'. I have looked at these from the point of view as a user who is interested in the capabilities of these packages (i.e. are they suitable for beginners or experienced users). After having seen them and formed my conclusions I have returned the originals and wiped the copies; one word processor will do me very nicely, thank you. But I now know some of the capabilities and limitations of these programs and am in a position to advise my fellow members. Software distributors and dealers may well be horrified by my suggestions in the previous paragraph, but perhaps, if they made more application-type software available for *extended* reviews (with certain guarantees regarding copying to be observed of course), software piracy could be reduced substantially.

Ralph De Vries

RANDOM BITS

3.5" DISK DRIVES

Last year we organised a bulk deal on memory expansion boards for our members (and wasn't it a bargain - current discounted prices quoted now are 50% higher!); now we have managed to locate a supplier for 3.5" disk drives at very competitive prices. Here are the specs:

- uses only the high quality NEC drive mechanism.
- has throughport for daisy chaining other drives.
- extra long 600mm flat cable.
- attractive styling with perfect match plastic coating.
- Australian designed and manufactured.
- SIX (6) months full warranty.

And the price to our members is only \$295.00! (collected). For mail orders allow an extra \$5.00 for postage and packaging (\$300.00 total). Make your cheques payable to:
Commodore Computer Users Group (Qld) Inc.
For more details or orders ring Ralph De Vries on (07) 300 3477.

AUGUST MAIN MEETING

Annual General Meeting

Norm Chambers opened the proceedings of the evening by inviting the President, Greg Perry to present his annual report for the financial year 1987 - 1988.

Greg pointed out once more that the continuing growth of our group (current membership 847) is largely due to the untiring efforts of a few dozen members who give up so much of their spare time to devote to the welfare of our group. He specifically mentioned the contributions made by Doreen and Allan Horne who do such a magnificent job in keeping our lending library in such great shape, and the largely unsung efforts of Greg Shea, our technical coordinator and sysop, and Bruce Wylie, the meeting coordinator of the Amiga S.I.G, who not only provided his computer equipment for a substantial part of the year, but also looked after Amiga disk- and accessory sales. These and all the other unnamed workers deserve the gratitude of all our members. He followed this up by expressing his thanks to Norm Chambers, the retiring secretary, for the tremendous job that he has done during his term in office. The steady growth in membership during the last four years can to a large extent be contributed to his untiring efforts (applause from the floor).

Next it was the turn of our Treasurer, John Van Staveren, to present the audited financial report. He pointed out that during the last twelve months there has been a steady increase in the income of our group, but expenditure has increased rather more dramatically over this same period. If it wasn't for the substantially increased sales of disks, hardware and software the group's financial picture would look a lot less healthy. A copy of the group's Balance Sheet can be found in this issue of Cursor.

Following the reading of the annual reports our senior member Lex Hinckley took the chair to conduct the election of members of the management committee for the new financial year. There being only one nomination for each position the following members were elected:

President: Greg Perry, *Secretary:* Mike Williams, *Treasurer:* John Van Staveren
Technical Coordinator: Greg Shea, *Sub-Group Coordinator:* Terry Steer
Chief Librarian: Allan Horne, *Newsletter Editor:* Ralph De Vries

The first task of our newly reappointed President was to nominate both Norm Chambers and Lester Bennett, our former treasurer, for Life Membership for services rendered to our group. These nominations were greeted with unanimous applause from the floor.

After the appointment of Mr. K. M. Pedersen as auditor of for the new financial year the President closed the official part of the evening.

AMIGA SERVICE & MAINTENANCE

The remainder of the evening was devoted to the postponed talk by Tony May of ProDigital Services on what makes Amy tick and how to keep on making her tick. By means of a series of overhead transparencies Tony showed us a series of circuit diagrams of the different models of the Amiga. Although these diagrams were probably too technical for quite a few of our members Tony went on to explain in more down-to-earth terms likely sources of trouble spots which Amiga owners might experience. It was a most informative talk.

JULY WORKSHOP

Some 40 odd members turned up for this meeting. This is the workshop meeting which we designate, for want of a better term, as the *real workshop* meeting where members get together to learn something. At this particular meeting Ken Clem conducted a beginners session, Mike Williams ran an AmigaBasic segment, Andre Marino showed off the reasonably new *Benchmark Modula-2* compiler and Robert Goode looked after a group who were interested in Video and Graphics. We were also pleased to welcome our longtime Rockhampton member, Rod Collins, who was passing through our fair city.

NEW PUBLIC DOMAIN DISK LIBRARIAN

We welcome Mark Eckert who, in conjunction with his wife Vivien, will look after our Amiga P.D. Library, dispatch mail orders and make the P.D. disks available at our bi-monthly P.D. workshop meetings. All mail orders for P.D. disks are to be addressed to : C.C.U.G.(Q) Inc., P.O. Box 274, Springwood, Q. 4127. Pricing details on page 2 of this newsletter.

ENHANCED GRAPHICS CHIPS

In the July '88 issue of Cursor mention was made (page 7) of the new enhanced chip set for the A500 and A2000. Well don't rush out to your dealer to order these chips just yet. It seems that they will appear *at some stage in the future when the new version 1.4 software is ready*. As version 1.3 hasn't even been released yet, it's extremely unlikely that these new chips will be available for another year or more.

NORM CHAMBERS - THE REAL STORY

He's gone and done it.... he's quit! After practically four years 'our' Norm has decided that it was time to pack it in. Of course you've all heard his reason for quitting, haven't you? Val (that's Norm's wife) has threatened him with divorce. Well, that's his story, but we know better don't we? *He has deserted us for an IBM clone!!!* Yes, that's fair dinkum. Here we have spent years trying to teach him all the ins-and-outs of the C-64. After he got stuck into an infinite loop for three days while he was trying to write his first Basic program (he did get out of it at last by switching off the mains power supply), we felt like giving up in desperation. We then tried him on a C-128 with even more disastrous results (he never did figure out the difference between the C64, C128 and CP/M modes), so, as a last resort, we told him that the Amiga was the answer to all his prayers. And then the ungrateful so-and-so goes and buys an IBM clone!

The worst aspect of the 'Chambers Case' is that I am the guy who suggested that he might make a *reasonably* good secretary. After all he had all the right attributes; ex-schoolteacher, now insurance salesman, bald pate and glasses, always wore collar and tie, and he had access to a photo copier at work; you'll have to admit that he *appeared* to be the right choice. Well, how wrong can you be!!!

We all know what a secretary is supposed to do, don't we? Take the minutes at our meetings. But not our Norm; he knew better! He decided that he'd also become the unofficial ambassador for our group - the gall of the man! In his job as insurance salesman he did a fair amount of travelling throughout Queensland and Northern New South Wales. So our Norm decided that, rather than sell insurance, he'd tell the natives all about how wonderful the CCUGQ was. From Cairns to Grafton he merrily went on his way flogging the benefits of Commodore Computer Users Group membership rather than do his real job of selling life insurance. Well, you all know the results, don't you? The membership of our group has more than doubled during his term in office, and his wife has been complaining bitterly ever since because he hasn't been getting any bonus payments from his company during the last four years. If ever a woman had to suffer it would have to be Val Chambers.

When he occasionally did come home (between country trips he even found time to annoy our members all over Brisbane as well) he devised an elaborate scheme to make sure that all his pals in the country would wine and dine him on his return visits - he started writing letters to them! Now it is a well known fact that computer users group secretaries *never* answer letters from members, let alone write to them first! But our Norm had to be different! But even that wasn't enough for our chubby friend. He now started running messages for all his pals. One day he would be chasing up printer ribbons, the next day it would be printers, and in no time he was supplying his mates with complete computer outfits. A regular Allan Bond, that secretary of ours! Of course in the end his wife got fed up with him and made him up a campbed under the house, right beside his computer and printer. As he suffers greatly from insomnia you could find Norm at 2 or 3 am in front of his 128 writing letters to country members and updating the group's database, just to see how many more new members he could add. (Greg Perry wrote that program for Norm in the hope that this would stop him from writing letters, but we all know now that it was in vain.) In fact you could say that our Norm started to suffer from 'computer club mania'.

Well, the rest of this sorry tale you all know.... his insurance company told him that he was too old for all that country travelling (a nice white lie - we know that he wasn't selling enough insurance), but as they felt sorry for his wife and starving children they decided out of the goodness of their hearts to give him a deskjob. However, after having listened for several years now to Norm's bragging about how he managed to increase the CCUGQ membership during his country trips, they finally got the better of him in a very cunning way! To stop him from getting into anymore mischief he was told that, if he wanted to keep his job, he first had to quit his job as secretary of the CCUGQ. Next they took away his telephone because he is such an inveterate talker, and to really put the boot in, they found him an old unused IBM clone and told him to start programming the thing!

That is really the end of this sad tale. It is easy to forecast what will happen next - not being a programmer he is bound to get stuck into an infinite loop again any day. He will probably try his old trick of throwing the main switch and thus plunge the insurance company's skyscraper into total darkness and confusion - result the golden (or rather tin) handshake for Norm, and then the dole.

We, the remaining members of the Management Committee, felt sorry for this poor unfortunate devil and when Greg Perry suggested that we make him a life member, we all agreed. It means that, even when he is on the dole and his wife and kids have deserted him, he can still come to Bardon once a month and reminisce about the good olden days when he was secretary!

I'll miss you Norm, after all I got you into this and feel partially responsible for your plight. Will you forgive me for publishing the 'real' story.....?

.....now I recently met this nice guy, well dressed, well spoken, sports a beard (a bit of a disadvantage), and is in banking (money, money!), owns a computer as well..... perhaps he would make a worthy successor to Norm Chambers..... how about it Mike?

Ralph De Vries

COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT - JULY 1987 TO 30 JUNE 1988

1987		1988
\$		\$
REVENUE		
17,412.19	Membership Fees	18,177.20
-	Library Fees	2,775.00
478.22	BBS Membership Fees	5.00
5.00	Consultancy Fees	10.00
46.40	Cursor Sales	388.70
100.00	Printer Hire	120.00
930.00	Advertising	780.00
.67	Donations	.50
503.09	Interest	424.21
-	Miscellaneous Receipts	84.00
19,475.57	TOTAL REVENUE	22,764.61
EXPENSES		
501.70	Advertising	555.34
91.62	Bank Charges	81.35
104.56	BBS Expenses	780.93
4,316.08	'CURSOR' Expenses	7,964.27
5,113.41	Depreciation	9,454.26
6.20	Freight	45.00
809.13	General Expenses	430.69
568.33	Insurances	558.23
12.80	Legal Fees	13.70
54.71	M-ship/Affiliation Fees	53.70
848.15	Postage	743.56
39.00	Post Box Charges	39.00
1,358.65	Printing and Stationery	751.19
585.00	Venue Hire	1,657.70
66.12	Repairs and Maintenance	391.48
-	Stamp Duty (State)	.30
619.06	Telephone	1,487.11
205.50	Travelling	142.00
15,300.02	TOTAL EXPENSES	25,149.81
5,214.45	GROSS PROFIT (LOSS) - TRADING ACCOUNT	8,918.09
9,390.00	NET PROFIT	\$ 6,532.89
=====		=====

COMMODORE COMPUTER USER GROUP (QLD) INC.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 1988

1987		1988	
\$		\$	\$
MEMBERS EQUITY			
9,223.65	Opening Equity		18,613.65
9,390.00	Net Profit		6,532.89
<u>18,613.65</u>	TOTAL EQUITY		<u>25,146.54</u>
=====			=====
REPRESENTED BY			
CURRENT ASSETS			
10.00	Petty Cash - President	10.00	
60.00	Petty Cash - Editor	50.00	
40.00	Petty Cash - Secretary	40.00	
50.00	Petty Cash - Treasurer	50.00	
10.00	Petty Cash - Disk Librn.	-	
6,988.18	Bank - CTB/Sth. Brisbane	13,154.99	
207.85	Sundry Debtors	81.00	
4,402.00	Stock on Hand	3,507.70	
11,768.03	TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		16,893.69
FIXED ASSETS			
987.04	Book Library	867.94	
219.42	Magazine Library	324.96	
3,069.89	Software Library	3,158.02	
3,157.41	Equipment	4,080.48	
2,549.37	BBS Equipment	1,490.71	
9,983.13	TOTAL FIXED ASSETS		9,922.11
21,751.16	TOTAL ASSETS		26,815.80
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
2,190.00	Library Bonds	-	
947.51	Membership in Advance	1,632.76	
-	Cannon Hill Sub Group	36.50	
			1,669.26
3,137.51	TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,669.26
<u>18,613.65</u>	TOTAL NET ASSETS		<u>\$25,146.54</u>
=====			=====

3,5" DISK DRIVES

- * Uses only the high quality NEC mechanism
- * Has throughport for daisy chaining other drives
- * Extra long 600 mm flat cable
- * 100% Compatibility with A500 and A1000
- * Attractively styled with matching plastic coating
- * Australian designed and manufactured
- * SIX (6) months full warranty

\$295.00

(+ \$5.00 Packing & Postage)

**For details contact Ralph De Vries on
(07) 300 3477**

SOFTWARE REVIEW

THE DIRECTOR

by Robert Googe

Have you sat down at your Amiga with the AmigaBasic manual open in front of you wondering how you could import IFF images, digitized sound and manipulate them with ease? Or have you just wanted to create a simple slideshow with graphics, a little sound and perhaps some animation? Well, wonder no more - *The Director* is here!

I know that introduction paragraph was a little corny, but the answers to the above questions are readily available through a software package for about \$130.00. The Director does not add commands to AmigaBasic but is a complete language in itself, very similar to Basic, so much so that even a novice can be writing quite complex programs within an hour of using the package. The main difference between The Director and Basic is that it is written with the graphics/sound user in mind and all commands lend themselves to this. Those users of Basic will be immediately familiar with many common commands (i.e. IF/THEN/ELSE, FOR/NEXT, GOSUB/RETURN, PRINT, etc.), but there are powerful commands for manipulating graphics such as BLIT (moving chunks of graphics memory around), ANIM, (playing Videoscape 3D animations), DISSOLVE, FADE, WIPE, etc., etc.

A simple slideshow display might look something like this*:

```
LOAD 1, ":pictures/pic1.pic"
LOAD 2, ":pictures/pic2.pic"
LOAD 3, ":pictures/pic3.pic"
10 DISPLAY 2
PAUSE 50
DISPLAY 3
PAUSE 50
DISPLAY 1
PAUSE 50
GOTO 10
```

* this script is straight from The Director demo.

This script will load three IFF pictures of any size and resolution (yes it will work with PAL graphics) and display them continuously one after the other with a pause of five seconds between each.

The Director is a 'script' based language, that means that you create a file (with ED or any other ASCII text editor) that contains your program. The next step is to let The Director process the file by:

```
1> director filename
```

This is very similar to compiling but is basically optimising and generating a very efficient command set from your program. As The Director processes the file it will simultaneously run it to let you see the result of your work. Another file is included on the supplied disk called Projector, which is freely distributable with your creations, and enables you to create self booting slideshows and presentations. On this disk there are three demos with scripts to show how it is done. Incidentally some of the public domain displays such as RGB and the Probe Sequence were done with The Director.

The Director itself is very efficient with memory, and lets you make the most of any expansion memory you may have. The only data that needs to be stored in Chip memory are the current display page and any sound effects that are currently in use (this is a little bit of a

problem if you want to use long digitised sound samples). The program also lets you run CLI commands from inside the script with a simple EXECUTE command, so you may run a SMUS music player with a composition from Deluxe Music as a background to your graphics display.

If you are into Amiga graphics production at any level or if you wish to program in a graphics environment, I would suggest you take a close look at The Director - I highly recommend it. I picked up my copy from Computer View at Bundamba for \$123.50 (\$130.00 less 5% user group discount).

-ooOoo-

EXAMPLE MACROS

for the Programmable Editors MicroEmacs V3.8b and Uedit V2.0

by Michael J. Thomas

Although probably of little use to most casual computer users, the programming languages which form part of certain editors are a must for large scale repetitive work on text files. Such work is usually related to the preparation of program source code, but may occur from time to time in the course of normal word processing. The aim of this article is to provide practical examples of the use of the programming features of Emacs and Uedit, rather than full reviews or a tutorial. However, for those unfamiliar with these editors, brief descriptions of each are provided below.

There are to my knowledge three programmable editors available in the public domain for Amiga users. In this article I will provide code for use with MicroEmacs V3.8b and Uedit V2.0. The third programmable editor is DME. It is not covered here because it does not offer a cross-computer standard as MicroEmacs does, nor the vast range of capabilities offered by Uedit.

For general editing Uedit has to be seen to be believed. Almost the entire human-machine interface, from text editing functions to menu windows, is written in its programming language and can therefore be changed and added to at will to suit the users needs. Almost any functional ability you could require from a text-editor as opposed to a word-processor is provided, including column based and multi-buffer operations. Minor bugs concerning pull-down menu operations occasionally cause problems as do idiosyncratic key assignments. An updated version of this program (2.3) is now available on Fish Disk 121, which I have yet to see.

MicroEmacs V3.8b although not provided with the broad range of options or the snazzy Intuition interface available to Uedit, is derived from a project aimed at standardising MicroEmacs across popular types of micro-computer. The C source code provided enables the editor to be recompiled on any of these machines, using the appropriate files. MicroEmacs is clearly aimed at programmers. For example, when a C source file is loaded, the editor enters "cmode" which includes auto-indenting. Version 3.9e is now available on Fish Disk 119, and once again I have yet to pick up a copy.

The programming language provided as a part of Uedit is incredibly rich in functions and control structures. Unfortunately it is also correspondingly complex and excessively verbose. An example program to partially convert MODULA II code to C is provided in Listing 1. (I must add that I would prefer to go in the opposite direction, but was a victim of circumstances.) The major problem in using this language is that no manual is provided for it, although perhaps this may have changed in the latest version.

The Emacs language while rich in functions, lacks the diversity of control structures provided with Uedit, but makes up for this by being considerably more readable with named variables and simpler syntax. One of the most boring tasks I have when writing geological reports involves the description of sequentially numbered geochemical samples which may number over a

hundred even after a short field mapping programme. Listing 2 provides code to insert sample numbers and automatically update the numerical portion. The sample numbers take the general two-part alphanumeric form [string] [number] eg. STE31, a22.

Listing 3 provides for the insertion of Epson printer control codes in text, in this case for superscript and subscript functions, and the reassignment of the Del key to the MicroEmacs function "delete-next-character". Text containing the printer control codes supplied should be sent to PAR: rather than PRT:. A complication arises in that the printer control codes contain the escape character (Hex 1B), which is represented in the listing by "\[". This character must be inserted by means of the MicroEmacs key sequence "control-q". The same applies to the "del" character (Hex 7F) represented by "~?".

I hope that the examples provided above encourage readers to try making their lives easier; after all, what else are computers for. For quick jobs I personally prefer MicroEmacs, as its language is lean, mean and easy to use. Those who don't need a programmable editor should never-the-less try the examples described above (particularly Uedit) to see just how good public domain software can be. If you prefer not to type the examples in, please feel free to contact me on (07) 800 4511.

Incidentally, this article was written and formatted using MicroEmacs.

..... LISTING 1.

<shftAltCtl-c:

```
tabsToSpaces putMsg(" ")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"PROCEDURE",all)
equateLoc(curFile,eInvert,sInvert)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("PROCEDURE 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"FROM",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"extern /* ",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("FROM 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"WriteLn",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"printf",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("WriteLn 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"WriteString",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"puts",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("WriteString 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
```

```

freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"IMPORT",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,""/ ",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("IMPORT 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"AND",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"&&",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("AND 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"NOT",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"!",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("NOT 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"BEGIN",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"|",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("BEGIN 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"END",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"|",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("END 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"FOR",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"for (",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("FOR 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"ELSE",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"| else {",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("ELSE 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"WHILE",all)

```

```

insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"while (" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("WHILE 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"IF" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"if (" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("IF 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"DO$THEN" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile," {" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("DO and THEN 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"=" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"==" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("logical = 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,":==" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"=" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg(":'s removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"<>$#" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"!=" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("<> and # 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"EXIT" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"break" ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("EXIT 's removed")

```

```

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"RETURN" ,all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"return " ,all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)

```

```

putMsg("RETURNS 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"CONST",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"#define",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("CONST 's removed")

moveCursor(curFile,sFile)
freeBuf(buf49)
freeBuf(buf48)
insertRgn(buf49,sFile,"OR",all)
insertRgn(buf48,sFile,"!!",all)
if (runkey(normal-f9)) runKey(alt-f10)
putMsg("OR 's removed")

```

..... Listing 2.

```

;
; Make sample numbers for a sample description appendix.
;
; M. J. Thomas, January, 1988
;
1 store-macro
  newline
  newline
  insert-string &cat %prefix %num
  insert-string " - "
  set %num &add %num 1
!endm

; set the alpha part of the sample number
2 store-macro
  set %prefix @"Sample number prefix: "
!endm

; set the numeric part
3 store-macro
  set %num @"Initial post prefix number: "
!endm

; bind to f1, f2, f3
bind-to-key execute-macro-1 FN0
bind-to-key execute-macro-2 FN1
bind-to-key execute-macro-3 FN2

```

..... LISTING 3.

```

;
; PAR: device control macros (EPSON)
; and a fix for the delete key bug.
;
; NOTE: USE THE CONTROL-Q COMBINATION TO INSERT ESC "~[" (1BH)

```

```

;      AND DEL "^?" (7FH) USING THE ESC AND DEL KEYS.
;
; M.J. Thomas April 1988
;

; start superscript

1 store-macro
  insert-string    "^[SO"
!endm

; start subscript

2 store-macro
  insert-string    "^[SI"
!endm

; end super/subscript

3 store-macro
  insert-string    "^[T"
!endm

; Bind the above macros to function keys for convenience

bind-to-key execute-macro-1 FN0    ; F1
bind-to-key execute-macro-2 FN1    ; F2
bind-to-key execute-macro-3 FN2    ; F3

; Set the delete key to its usual function

bind-to-key delete-next-character  ^?

```

-ooOoo-

ART, ANIMATION, VIDEO & GRAPHICS

The Amiga Video Special Interest Group

by Robert Googe

In our July main meeting it was suggested that a VIDEO Special Interest Group be formed to give all the creative users of the Amiga somewhere to get and give information. Volunteers for the job of coordinator were called for, I stuck my hand up (*you silly twisted boy, you!*) and here I am!

I will be trying to bring together anyone with any sort of experience on the Amiga and peripherals in the creative area. This means Art, Graphics, Animation, Video, Sound, Digitising (Audio and Video), etc. This may seem like a very broad area to aim at - but we have to start somewhere and all these areas can be used in Amiga Video. Hopefully this will become a regular column in CURSOR to exchange ideas, tips & hints, etc. At the last "User's" Workshop meeting we had about 10 - 15 people interested in the graphics field on the Amiga. The main discussion was on Videoscape 3D which I demonstrated and explained, from my experience with the package. As these Special Interest / User Workshops happen every two months, the next one will be in September (look for the date inside the front cover) and unless something else

is suggested, I will demonstrate The Director (an animation/slideshow/sound/presentation programming language similar to BASIC - see my review this issue).

Most of all, I would like to hear from you. If you are involved in this area with the Amiga, whether it be hobbyist or professional, I would like you to share your experiences, triumphs and frustrations with the group (along with any examples of work you may have done).

SIDELINES

Amiga's seem to be popping up everywhere of late, on a recent trip to Sydney I visited the Power House Museum and found Amigas everywhere. They were mainly set up as interactive consoles with a track ball and two push buttons as the user interface (taking the place of the mouse). They were doing everything from letting you style and design custom tea-pots and how they fitted into history, through fashion swim-suit design to world-wide communications network simulation.

Hopefully by the time you read this nearly all the popular graphics packages for the Amiga will be available in PAL format rather than NTSC - this should include Videoscape 3D, Deluxe Paint II, Photon Paint (was released as a PAL program), Digi-Paint, Sculpt/Animate 3D, TV-Show, TV-Text, Video Titler, etc. This outbreak of PALness is not restricted to the graphics area but also business applications keen to use the extra 20% of screen available in Australia and Europe.

-ooOoo-

PUBLIC DOMAIN DISK LIBRARY

by Ralph De Vries

Because our PD disk library has grown to such immense proportions we felt that it was time that order be restored. To do so I started by reorganising our PD catalogue disk.

Up till now our catalogue disk was made up out of the "READ ME" files of the Fish disks which gave us a listing and description of the contents of these disks. Regrettably the other PD disk producers didn't use a similar system of describing disk contents, and this meant that content description files had to be created with a text editor or word processor. Even though we were still caught out when members asked us where a particular program could be found. Another problem with our catalogue disk was that newcomers had problems accessing it, because it could only be used through the CLI.

To the rescue came *DIRMASTER 1.1*, a shareware program by Greg Peters. For some time I have used this to catalogue our Disk Magazine Library (Megadisc, JumpDisk etc.). In use this program turns out to be flexible, friendly and fast. So one fine day I sat down and entered all our current PD disks into *DIRMASTER*. In the case of our current range of Fish Disks (143) I had to create two files, so that they would fit in a standard 512K Amiga. The first file contains Fred Fish Disks 1 to 90 (minus disks no. 57, 80 and 88, which were withdrawn), and the second file contains all the Fish disks from no. 91 onwards. To give you some idea of the size of the second file (56 disks), after entering all the disks there was a grand total of 6364 records! After removing all the record extensions ("duplicates") this was reduced to 4683 records, and after also removing the .INFO files this was further reduced to 4361 records. Additionally there are separate files for the *AMICUS* (Amazing Computing) disks, *AMIGAN* (AMIGAN APPRENTICE & JOURNEYMAN) disks and *TBAG* (Tampa Bay Amiga Group) disks. Last, but not least we have a file which lists our own CCUGQ PD disks. Not catalogued are a small group of disks which didn't fit in any particular category. These include items like the *NEWTEK* demo disks 1 and 2, a *FUTURE SOUND* Digitising demo disk, catalogue disks from *TPUG* and *DISKWORKS* and two magazine disks from the *AUSTRALIAN AMIGA USERS ASSOCIATION*. I shall not try to explain the workings of *DIRMASTER*, as a 30 page READ ME instruction file is supplied on the disk. Remember that the program is shareware though, which means that you are morally bound to pay a contribution to the author.

We have gone with a fine toothcomb through our own set of PD disks and weeded out that

material which was either old, irrelevant or wouldn't run on the later Amigas. As a result of this culling we have 11 disks left (+ 14 new sound disks). A short description follows:

CCUGQ-PD 1: Graphics - pictures can be viewed with the *SHOW* program, which is included on the disk.

CCUGQ-PD 2: More Graphics - do. do.

CCUGQ-PD 3: CSIRO Aerial Pics, compiled by Greg Perry.

CCUGQ-PD 4: More CSIRO Pics by Greg Perry.

CCUGQ-PD 5: Basic & Graphics Programs by Jim Fang.

CCUGQ-PD 6: Contains BLACKJACK (by Mike Williams), MONOPOLY (by Ron Lewis) and ZorkLook (by Brian Parker), as well as the hi-res version of Diskman.

CCUGQ-PD 7: A bootable disk with a VirusKiller, as well as some other Virus Killers.

CCUGQ-PD 8: A C Source Code Disk

CCUGQ-PD 9: Single Drive Icon-controlled C compiler (Lattice 3.1)

CCUGQ-PD 10: 'Golden Oldies' Graphics - view with *SHOW*.

CCUGQ-PD 11: *DIGI-VIEW* demo disk (Graphics again.)

CCUGQ-PD 12: Sonix Music Player #2

CCUGQ-PD 13: Sonix Music Data 1

CCUGQ-PD 14: Sonix Music Data 2

CCUGQ-PD 15: Sonix Music Data 3

CCUGQ-PD 16: Sonix Music Data 4

CCUGQ-PD 17: Sonix Music Data 5

CCUGQ-PD 18: Sonix Music Data 6

CCUGQ-PD 19: Sonix Music Data 7

CCUGQ-PD 20: Sonix Music Data 8

CCUGQ-PD 21: Sonix Music Data 9

CCUGQ-PD 22: Sonix Music Data 10

CCUGQ-PD 23: Sonix Music Data 11

CCUGQ-PD 24: Sonix Music Data 12

CCUGQ-PD 25: Sonix Music Data 13

The last 14 disks (PD12 - 25) contain song files in SMUS format, which can be used directly with the Sonix program. Users of Deluxe Music Construction Set have to convert these files to the appropriate format.

Mark Eckert is our new public domain librarian and is in charge of the library during the bi-monthly P.D. workshop meetings and looks after the mail order sales.

COLOUR PRINTERS

by George Harris (VK2KET)

Forget that serial or parallel port connection for your printer. To get the state of the art colour printer technology, you may soon be hooking up your computer's video output directly to your printer. Sony has developed a thermal-transfer colour printer that, while designed primarily for broadcasters who want still photos from videos, offers a tantalizing glimpse of where colour printer technology is going. The UP-5000 does have an RS-232C port, but it's used for picture editing and control, not for carrying data. The printer accepts a wide variety of video inputs, including standard National Television System Committee (NTSC) video and analog RGB, and other standards like differential R-Y, B-Y and S-video. The interface digitizes 8 bits of video and can print 256 variations of each primary colour (magenta, yellow and cyan). That amounts to something like 10 million possible colours per pixel. The printer captures images in an internal buffer and stores up to two frames. You can view the image on a colour monitor and adjust the colour tones under computer control. A full size print from the UP-5000 is 6 x 4.5 inches, and the unit will also do overhead transparencies. It takes 67 seconds for it to do its work on each print using special colour thermal paper, and you can print multiple copies from the frame buffer. Print quality is stunning - virtually indistinguishable from a commercial colour print, not at all like the muted colours from most of today's colour computer printer.

DEARLY C-LOVED

Dearly C-loved, we are assembled here together because PC-ing is believing. We are here to console each other; ASCII and you shall receive. Yea we say that there is life worth debugging. Data, data, everywhere, but not a thought to think - that is the problem.....

Friends, perhaps you know someone out there with a terminal illness, some poor hacker with bloodshot eyes, in data distress, who's been attacked by the evil one, GLITCH, and his wicked helper, Missingstuffinfiles. Even if your data has been blown to HAL, there's not a thing we can do to bring it back. But we can solace you in your hour of need....

And that is why the Giver Of Data, G.O.D. has downloaded to me, from the heavenly host mainframe, the Keyboard Prayer for the Data Distressed. Now let us make the sign of the monitor (a square traced in the air, if you would like to try it at home), bow our heads and pray responsively.....

..... Forgive us our I/O errors as we forgive those whose logic circuits are faulty. Lead us not into frustration and deliver us from power surges. For thine is the algorithm, the application and the solution, looping for ever and ever. RETURN! As I hold aloft my Binary Bible, translated from the ancient COBOL, and read from the first book SYSGEN 1:1 "In the beginning, the Giver Of Data generated silicon and carbon, and the system was without architecture, and un-initialized, and randomness was upon the arrangement of the matrix"

And now some announcements:

For the Cathode-lics in the audience, CHIP (the Church of Heuristic Information Processing; the first user-friendly church) is opening a new high school, Our Lady of Perpetual Upgrades (we don't have Nuns, we have Nulls), and a new Junior high, PC Jr..

This Thursday, the BAR-CODE MITZVAH for the Petersons will be held.

For the school kids, I have two quotes, one from the Ten Commands, "Thou shalt not pirate software", and the second from the twenty third PROMS, "Yea, though I commute to the Valley each day, I fear no evil, for my Amlga is running. You prepare me for the desk space in the office of my competitors.....".

For the Bootists, the mantra of the week is "OHMS, EPROM, RAM, ROM".

For the CPMoslems, this week we will be reading from the Core-RAM.

Now let us open our hymnals and sign Hymn 1101101, "Amazing Space, how sweet it is to have a disk like thee. My files were lost, but now they're found. There's room in my PC."

That about ends today's lecture, friends, but I want you all to remember, "There's no need to abandon hope, all ye who press enter; in the end everything will be right justified..."

Now let us sing, "RETURN.... RETurn.... Return.... Return.... return.... retu....."

(Reprinted from Syntax Error, Newsletter of the Commodore Long Island Club, - Author Unknown.)

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(See reviews in ACR, June 88, and on MegaDisk-7)

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ABOUT PRINTING

by Ralph De Vries

INTRO:

Here I sit in front of my trusty 1000, a week before this issue's deadline with only one article (by Mike Thomas) and four adverts in my hot little hands. What do you do.....? A few phone calls to some of my regular contributors (no names mentioned of course!) met with the standard response: "too busy". Consider my predicament; I can either produce an eight- or twelve page newsletter or try to increase the size of same by filling it up with my own ramblings, so here goes. Hopefully these few introductory remarks of mine will make you all feel guilty and flood my desk with articles for the following issue.....

PROFESSIONAL PAGE VERSION 1.1 and the 1.3 PRINTER DRIVERS

A week or so ago Greg Perry rung me with the interesting news that he had managed to borrow a copy of *Professional Page*, version 1.1. I assume that most of my readers will have seen the adverts for this program by now; produced by the Canadian company GOLD DISK, it is the professional version of their earlier *PageSetter* program. For those readers who never read computer magazines, *PageSetter* is a so-called desktop publishing program for the Amiga. It came on the market some eighteen months ago and has gone through several upgrades. I reviewed that program (well, *review* is probably not the right term, it was more in the nature of an overview) in May 1987. I liked the program but was very much aware of its limitations, however I have kept on using it to produce the front cover of our newsletter.

The main limitations of the program were not of Gold Disk's making though - they were due to the restrictions of Commodore's implementation of the printing device. By trying to implement a universal system of printer controls, in itself a very noble aim, they managed to slow down printer output (I am referring to the printing of bit-mapped graphics) to a snail's pace and also prevent users of more sophisticated printers from accessing some of the advanced features of their printers through *Preferences*. The newly promised upgrade of the Amiga operating system, version 1.3, is supposed to have an improved system of printer drivers, but where is this upgrade? Program developers both here and overseas have been given *gamma* test versions of the new operating system, but there still is no official release date - it could be September of this year or September next year. Hopefully when it is released it will be bug free! However it appears that Commodore in the USA has relented somewhat and has allowed the use of the new version 1.3 printer drivers and *Preferences* by some of the very latest software. It was thus a pleasant surprise to see that *Professional Page* is using the new V. 1.3 printer driver system, without actually saying so!!! Well, how do you know that you are using the new system? Have a look at the next page - that's a picture of the new (second) graphics screen that can be found in *Preferences*. The second tell-tale difference is with the actual printer drivers themselves; there's a whole new range of these, but more about them later on.

But back to version 1.2 and dot-matrix printers; what is so wrong with them? Very little when it comes to printing out text with either a text editor or a word processor, but a great deal is wrong when we want to print out graphics. As previously stated, the process is agonizingly slow and the quality at best can be described as mediocre. Anybody who has tried to print out graphics on an ordinary 9-pin dot matrix printer with programs like DPaint, PrintMaster, DeluxePrint, *PageSetter* et al will have to admit that, at best, the quality is only so-so and, at worst, bloody awful. You all know what I mean: thin white lines irregularly or regularly spaced between passes of the print head, and characters formed unevenly - some thick and some thin. Hardly what you would call a 'professional result'! Well, what is the cause or causes of this problem? Perhaps the most thorough investigation of the problem can be found in

earlier editions of *The Amiga Apprentice and Journeyman* which has delved deeply into these and related problems. I don't intend to go into too much detail, but will just try to pinpoint one of the main causes of the problem. I am referring here to *PIXELS* and *DOTS PER INCH*.

Preferences V1.3.7



Smoothing

OFF

Left Offset

0.0 inches

Center OFF

Density

1 2 4 5 6 7

Color Correct

R G B
Color = 4890

Dithering

Ordered
F-S

Scaling

Fraction

Width Limit

0 inches

<- Limits

Bounded
Absolute
Pixels
Multiply

Height Limit

0 inches

OK

Cancel

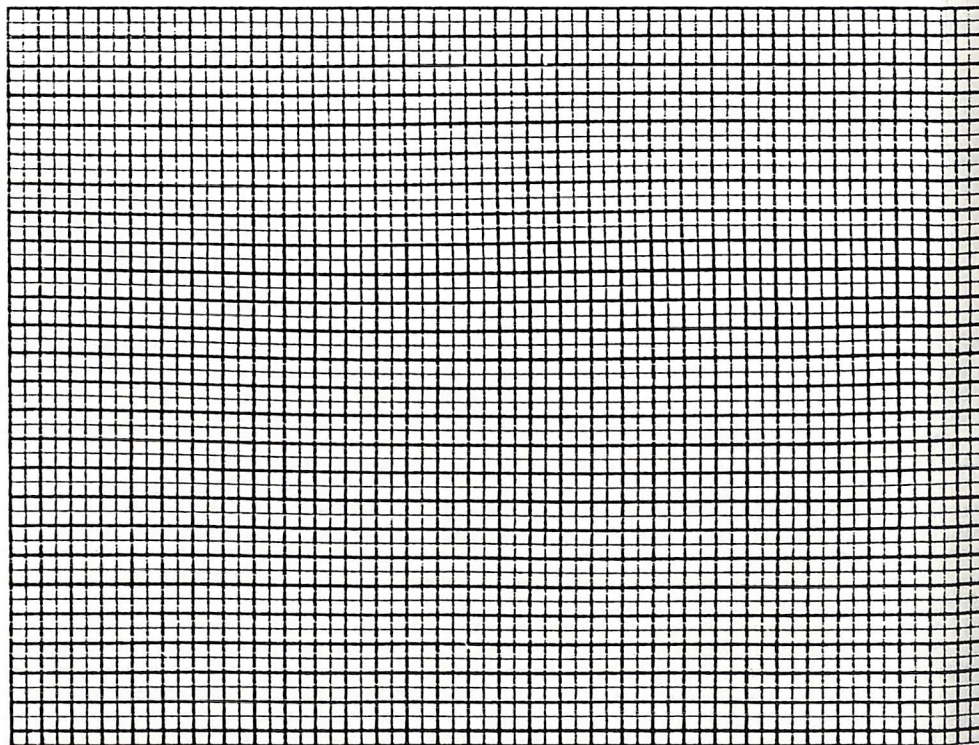
As you should know your Amiga screen is made up out of myriad tiny dots, called *PIXELS*, which, when 'turned on' or 'lit up' form characters or shapes or even pictures. You don't believe me? Just have a look at your screen with a magnifying glass, or better still, if you have a program like *DPaint*, go in the magnification mode and look closely - you now see a collection of pixels. The 'normal' workbench screen is in the so-called medium resolution mode and consists of 640 columns of 256 pixels (PAL mode, 640 x 200 in the American NTSC mode). If you do use a graphics program like *DPaint* you normally fire up in the low resolution mode which consists of 320 columns of 256 pixels (NTSC 320 x 200). If you magnify a lo-res screen you will notice that the pixels are square in shape, but if you try the same thing in the medium resolution mode you will notice that the pixels are rectangular in shape, i.e. twice as tall as they are wide. Now try the so-called high resolution mode (640 x 512) and you will notice that the pixels are square again, but only a quarter of the size of the pixels on the lo-res screen. For the purpose of the discussion we'll ignore the 'interlace' mode of 320 x 512 resolution as it is relatively little used, but no doubt you can guess what shape the pixels are on this screen. If you are curious, just have a look!

And now to dot-matrix printers and *DOTS*. As you all know characters are formed on a dot-matrix printer by a series of pins that print a series of dots on the paper. This is most obvious in *Draft* mode, as you can quite easily see the individual dots. To make the appearance

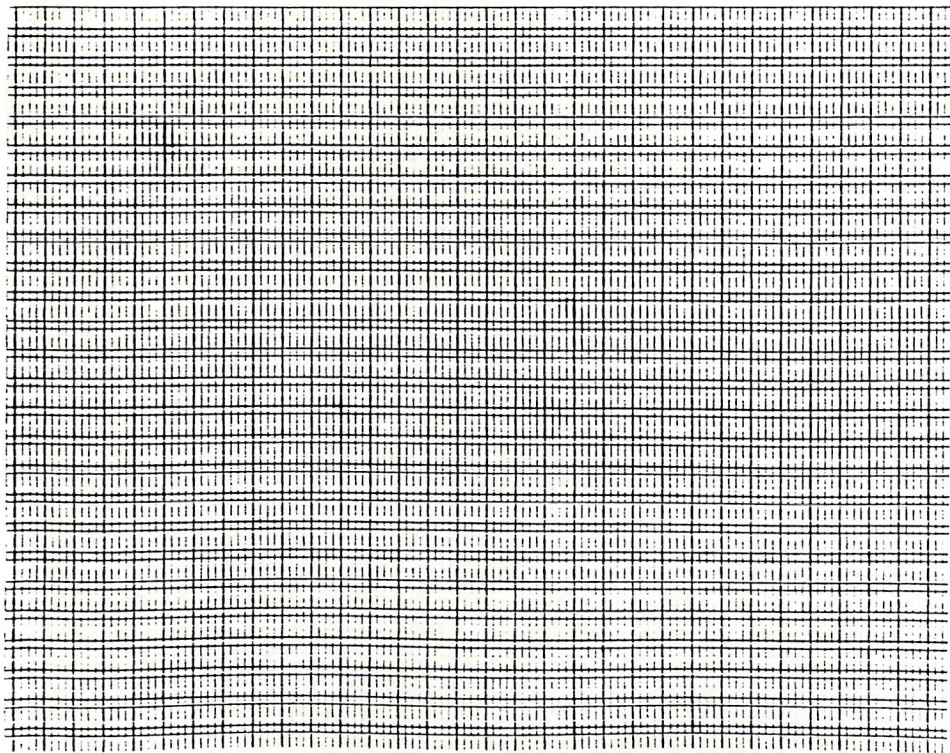
of your page less 'dotty' you can usually go in the bold or emphasized mode, which means that the same character is printed twice, but with the printhead slightly shifted for the second pass, which gives characters a more 'solid' look. Alternatively most modern printers offer a Near Letter Quality mode which also does a double pass across the paper and thus gives us characters that look a bit more like 'proper' typewriter characters.

But enough about the text mode - on to graphics printing. In your printer manual you will usually find some reference to the so-called 'Bit Image Modes'. Now, unless you are really 'into' printers, you will find these chapters pretty difficult to understand, but there's always some reference to the amount of dots per inch your printer is capable of printing. In the case of a typical 9-pin dot matrix printer (a Citizen 120D) they quote bit image modes of 60, 72, 80, 90, 120, 144 and 240 dots per inch! Getting confused? So you should be! However to simplify matters, the combination of Amy and a 9-pin printer normally prints graphics at 120 dots per inch. But now for a snag - in the *vertical* direction these printers print at the rate of 72 dots per inch! Are you getting even more confused, or is the dawn breaking through?

Assume for the moment you have just created a full screen low resolution picture with DPaint (i.e. a 320 x 256 pixel screen), and you now want to print it out. When DPaint's print requester screen pops up you set the margins to 1 and 80, and ask for a 100% wide printout. After the normal interminable wait while your masterpiece is printed and what have you got? Does it look pretty good? Great! Now draw a nice fine evenly spaced grid on your screen with your single pixel line drawing tool (say using a 5 pixel spacing) and print this out. Notice the uneven thickness of the lines? Do you know what has happened? The screen pixels don't match the printer dots!



Next we try using the high resolution mode and create a similar grid, with lines spaced 5 pixels apart (this means that there are four times as many lines on the screen) and print this out:



Oh, dear, oh dear, what has happened now? Not only are the lines of uneven thickness, but in the horizontal plane we have 'lost' a lot of lines! Yes, we have now a case of a gross mismatch between screen pixels and printer dots, i.e. in the horizontal plane we have to transfer 640 pixels to 8 x 120 dots per inch (i.e. 960 dots) and that just doesn't work! In the vertical plane the 512 pixels have to be translated into multiples of 72 dots per inch and here the discrepancies are even more severe; hence the missing lines. You might now understand why the *Notepad* fonts look so terrible when you try to print them out!

This is an utterly simplified description of some major problems associated with printing graphics on dot matrix printing. Add to the above additional factors like margin settings, uneven tractor feeds in printers, and you have a major headache on your hands. If you are really interested in the whys and wherefores I would suggest reading the articles in the aforementioned *Amigan Apprentice & Journeyman* (vol.2, no.3 and later issues). And what about the 24-pin dot matrix printers? They are capable of printing up to 360 dots per inch horizontally, and either 180 or 360 dots per inch in the vertical direction. Thus, theoretically, the NEC P2200 printer used for printing this newsletter, can print graphics at 360 x 360 d.p.i. which (again theoretically) must mean a substantial increase in quality. The only problem with version 1.2 of our operating system is that Commodore hasn't supplied any printer drivers for 24 pin printers! Fortunately the public domain provided us with several drivers for Epson 24 pin printers and they are at least partially compatible with NEC 24 pin printers - in fact Steve

McNamee wrote a specific printer driver for the NEC which I have been using for some time. By changing a few preference settings I was even able to print out at several dot densities. But now the new 1.3 printer drivers have come on stream, and it is a relatively simple procedure to install the new drivers and associated files on a 1.2 disk. All that one has to do is copy the new Preferences to your root directory, as well as the printer.device to the DEVS directory and the appropriate printer driver to the DEVS/PRINTERS subdirectory. The following printer drivers are found in this subdirectory:

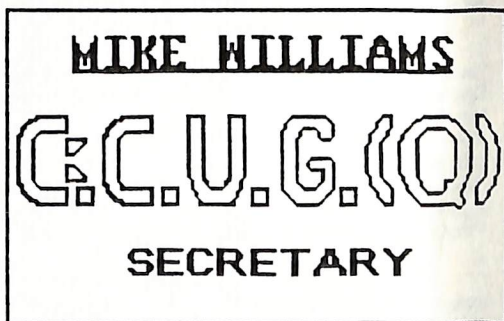
Calcomp ColorMaster
Canon PJ 1080A
CBM MPS 1000
Diablo C-150
EpsonQ (24-pin Epson compatible)
EpsonX (8/9-pin Epson compatible)
Howtek Pixelmaster
HP DeskJet / LaserJet / PaintJet / ThinkJet
Imagewriter II
NEC Pinwriter (24-pin P5/P6/P7/P9/P2200)
Okidata 92 / 2931
Okimate 20
Quadram QuadJet
Tektronics 4693D
Toshiba P351C / P351SX
Xerox 4020

All in all, an impressive array of printers, but I believe that the official release version of 1.3 will support even more printers.

From the limited experimenting that I have been able to do with the new drivers I can only conclude that they are a tremendous improvement on the 1.2 drivers, but I have to admit that I'm stuck! The reason.... I've got virtually no documentation on the new system. Take a look at that new preference screen. In the top lefthand corner there's an option called *Smoothing*. Originally called anti-aliasing, it assists in smoothing out the 'jaggies', as the following examples show:



Smoothing OFF



Smoothing ON

An obvious improvement, but it does only a partial smoothing job - the jaggies are still with us, but they are less objectionable. However, when you turn smoothing on the printing speed is halved. At this stage I better mention that the new printer driver system is considerably faster than the old one. As an example, the front page of CURSOR took 11 minutes to print out under 1.2. With the current settings that I use (including smoothing) it takes less than 4 minutes - a substantial improvement.

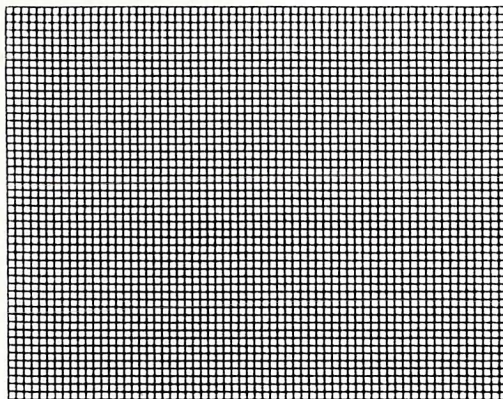
The next option is *Left Offset*, and is used for centering your output on the page. The *Density* option (top right of the page) is interesting; that's where you decide on how many dots you want to print out. As an example I will quote the figures for the EpsonX 9-pin driver:

<u>Density:</u>	<u>DPIHorizontally</u>	<u>DPIVertically</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	120	72	
2	120	144	two passes
3	240	72	
4	240	144	two passes
5	120	216	three passes
6	240	216	three passes
7	same as 6		

This means obviously that a better quality can be achieved with higher density, but again at the cost of speed when multi-passing is involved. If you have a lot of problems with fine white lines in printing out it's suggested to use friction feed rather than tractor feed, and additionally setting preferences to 'single' rather than 'fan fold' will alter the linefeed spacing and thus, hopefully, get rid of those unsightly white lines.

On the centre of the new preference screen we find the *Color Correct* option, which I believe is mainly of interest to owners of colour printers. *Dithering* offers three options. Create a grey scale with 16 steps from white to black and try them all three out - a very interesting exercise! My preference is for the Halftone option.

The *Scaling* option refers to the business of the uneven lines. Fraction scaling means exactly the same as printing out a full size picture under 1.2. Use Integer scaling and you print out pixel for dot. Here's an example:



Low Resolution (320 x 256) 5-pixel test pattern

It is now becoming obvious that a perfectly good printout of the 5 pixel pattern is quite possible with the new 1.3 system, but to some extent the proportions of the screen are distorted.

The options on the bottom of the new preferences graphic screen are all concerned with *Limits*. Without the proper documentation it's hard to know what they actually do, but they offer more control over the final printout dimensions of your graphics screens.

Given all these options it must become clear that most dot matrix printer users are going to be able to get better graphics printouts, but a certain amount of experimentation may be required before the best possible combination has been worked out. I am anxiously awaiting the official release of 1.3, including the documentation!

And what about *Professional Page*? This was initially released (version 1) to get the best possible results with PostScript-type laser printers. Subsequently the new version (1.1) has added dot matrix support amongst other improvements. Having used *PageSetter* I didn't really find *Professional Page* all that hard to use, but without the manual you won't get very far. Despite the support for dot matrix printers I find at this stage that *Professional Page* is not really suitable for use with dot-matrix printers, but with laser printers the results are first rate. (See the advert for GPTerm in this issue - this was produced using *Professional Page* and printed out on a PostScript-type laser printer.)

Never having owned or used a laser printer in my life, I'm not the right person to try to explain the how and why of these printers. Suffice it to say that there are basically two types of laser printers - the PostScript type and the Hewlett Packard (HP) type. Of the two the HP type and its clones (like the Commodore laser printer) are the cheaper, but they are also more limited than the PostScript type. The HP variety start out at about \$3000.00, but that is a very basic type which will allow printing out of text from one or two of the inbuilt fonts, but will well and truly let you down when you want to print graphics - you need more memory for that and that costs big bikkies. The PostScript variety of laser printers are the more versatile (they employ a series 68000 micro processor like the one in Amy). However they are even more memory hungry than the HP type, and prices are usually in \$10000.00 plus class. Currently a group of US companies are working on a scheme where the laser printer will use the (extra) memory of the Amiga rather than use a printer with heaps of memory that gets utilized for only a fraction of the time. If this project comes to fruition it will dramatically lower the prices of PostScript type laser printing. (Note: If any of my readers is actually using a laser printer with the Amiga we would very much like to hear from him/her.)

As *Professional Page* employs special PostScript type fonts (each font has a "metric font table" file), the on-screen representation is only an approximation of what the final printout will look like. The majority of these fonts look pretty bad when printed out on a dot-matrix printer. At this stage there doesn't seem to be a way to import other fonts, as *Professional Page* is looking for those metric font files. If it cannot find one of these the program ignores the font. This means that apparently you are locked into these PostScript type fonts. Without getting too technical with terms like kerning, leading (pronounced led-ding) and tracking, it appears that the actual spacing of the letters looks great when using laser printers, but absolutely terrible when using dot-matrix printers.

It has to be stressed that these are only first impressions. Obviously a high powered program like *Professional Page* needs both time and practice. The good news is that the Gold Disk company has made us an offer to purchase *Professional Page* at a fraction of the normal retail price; an offer too good to miss, so in the near future we will have our own copy to experiment with to our hearts content.

It must be obvious from the above that I am quite excited about the new 1.3 printer drivers. They are a big step forward towards obtaining better graphics printouts at higher speeds and this is all to the good. I hope that in the near future other members will have an opportunity to try out this new software and regale us with their experiences.

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"CURSOR" NEWSLETTER

Editor: RALPH DE VRIES - Ph. 300 3477
Associate Editor: ANDRE MARINO - Ph. 354 2662

BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEM: Phone Number (07) 344 1833

Sysop: GREG SHEA - Ph. 345 2799
Assistant Sysop: JIM VICK - Ph. 345 1878

Address all Newsletter Mail to: *The Editor "CURSOR", P.O. BOX 384, ASHGROVE, QLD, 4060.*
Deadline for the October issue is FRIDAY 2nd SEPTEMBER!
Current Page Format: 58 Lines - 90 Characters per Line.

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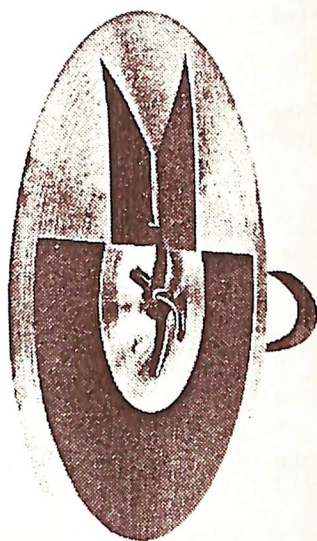
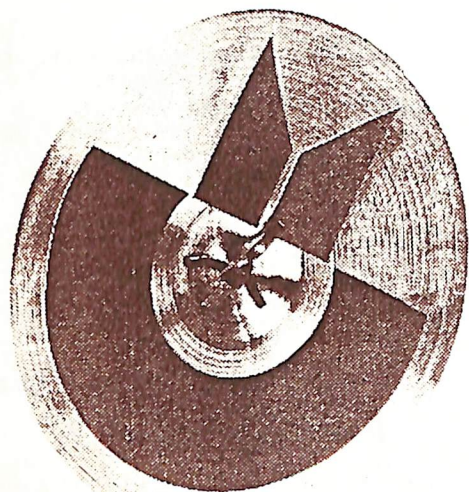
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Published by: COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.
P.O. Box 274, Springwood, Qld, 4127

Printed by: BANA SERVICES
36 Nerline St., Kingston, Qld, 4114.

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